

## ABSTRACT

This invention relates to an interactive medication cassette with a machine readable and writable information strip that contains information corresponding to the medication in the cassette. The interactive medication cassette holds the medication and couples the corresponding information to the medication. The cassette is designed for use in a medication distribution and inventory system that includes at least one medication dispensing machine having a sensor for reading the information in the strip and updating or altering this information when medication is added to or removed from the cassette. The cassette travels with the medication during the distribution of the medication to a patient, and its information is reported to one or more memory devices or hospital or pharmacy data base during this process. The cassette is filled by a pharmacy dispensing machine holding a bulk container filled with a particular type of medication and a singulator for counting the quantity of medication added to the cassette. The pharmacy dispensing machine alters the information strip to include medication and quantity information corresponding to the dispensed medication. The cassette is closed and locked to prevent unauthorized access during transport to a hospital floor workstation. A hospital floor dispensing machine incrementally dispense the medication from the cassette, and updates the information strip with additional information including the quantity of medication dispensed from the cassette. When the cassette is returned to the pharmacy and its unused contents is emptied into the bulk container, the information strip on the cassette automatically updates an information strip on the bulk container to indicate the number of doses of medication added to the bulk container. In this manner, a reliable medication distribution and inventory system is achieved while maintaining improved control over the access to the medication on the hospital floor.